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FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: AL-QIRBI PUSHES FOR HIGH-LEVEL US PARTICIPATION IN  
FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

REF: SANAA 1191

SUMMARY

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11. (U) In their November 20 meeting, the Ambassador reiterated his understanding to Foreign Minister al-Qirbi that the Secretary of State would not attend the Forum for the Future, while al-Qirbi continued to push for high-level U.S. participation. Al-Qirbi was optimistic but non-committal about Arab involvement in the Annapolis Conference.

THE FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

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12. (U) The first topic of discussion in the Ambassador's 25 minute, November 20 meeting with Foreign Minister al-Qirbi was the Forum for the Future. Al-Qirbi began by asking if the Ambassador had any new information. The Ambassador noted that he presumed the Minister knew by now that Assistant Secretary Welch had told Yemeni Ambassador to the United States al-Hajjri yesterday that the Secretary's attendance at the Forum was not viable in the absence of a satisfactory resolution to the Badawi case. Al-Qirbi indicated that the ROYG considered the Forum too important to abandon and intended to continue with it. He noted that he intended to place a call to his German counterpart that afternoon to discuss it.

13. (C) While appearing to accept that the Secretary would not attend, al-Qirbi continued to make the case for high level U.S. participation. He pointed out some people might see sub-ministerial U.S. participation as a sign that the U.S. is not serious about the Forum's goals and has lost interest. The Ambassador said that there should be no doubt about continued U.S. commitment to the Forum's goals and, in fact, it was concern that the Secretary's participation in the meeting would distract from serious discussion of those goals given the Badawi issue, that prompted her decision to stay away.

THE ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE

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14. (C) On the topic of the Annapolis conference, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of broad Arab participation to its success. He urged al-Qirbi himself to attend. The Foreign Minister replied that neither he nor his regional counterparts had received invitations. (Note: Post will forward the invitation immediately upon receipt. End Note.) Al-Qirbi went on to say that a group of Arab Foreign Ministers will meet in Cairo on November 22; he expected that a decision on participation would come out of that meeting. Overall, al-Qirbi appeared optimistic about the conference. He said he believed that all Arab countries would participate as long as the agenda includes issues seen

to be critical to a comprehensive settlement, including the Golan Heights and Shebba Farms. He indicated that the presence of Syria and Lebanon among the invitees was important as well.

#### CT COOPERATION IN THE POST BADAWI WORLD

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¶15. (C) The Ambassador noted the importance to the bilateral relationship of not allowing the Badawi case to become its defining issue. He noted frustration with Political Security Organization (PSO) Chief General Ghalib Mutahir Qamish, who appears to lack the will to move forward on building a clear strategic partnership with U.S. counterpart agencies. He noted that this subject would likely be raised with Qamish when he visits the United States next week. (Note. Qamish and Deputy PSO director Ammar Saleh will travel to the U.S. to meet with Senior U.S. Security Officials including the NSC and the Director of the FBI on a trip sponsored by post's POLMIL office. End Note.) The Ambassador reiterated to al-Qirbi that Post had not yet received the detailed information on President Saleh's surrender program, which Saleh had promised within four days on October 29 (reftel). Al-Qirbi noted that he had looked into the issue and that Deputy PSO Director General Ali Mansour, who was tasked with providing the information, continues to be preoccupied dealing with unrest in Southern Yemen. He said he would speak to Mansour about it again.

¶16. (C) Al-Qirbi took the opportunity of the meeting to express some of his personal views on the bilateral relationship. He said that it is important that we not allow our CT cooperation to become bogged down in issues of what he called "tactics," a clear reference to the handling of the Badawi case. He went on to say that people often don't

understand the social and tribal issues that come into play in Yemen and said if our two countries disagree on tactics, we should sit down and discuss them. Al-Qirbi then moved to the issue of the relationship between the diplomatic and security services. "In the past," he said, "the diplomatic services have been able to act as a bridge between the security services." He said that the ROYG now feels that the State Department has taken the side of the security services and is ignoring political issues. The Ambassador noted that the Badawi case had both security and political implications for the United States.

#### COMMENT

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¶17. (C) Although he appears to accept that Secretary Rice will not be attending the Forum for the Future, al-Qirbi was clearly looking for confirmation that the U.S. still intends to send a senior-level delegation. The ROYG has invested a lot of political capital in the Forum and will likely try to proceed with it as a Ministerial-level event. His comments on Arab participation in the Annapolis conference are encouraging. His responses to the Ambassador's CT cooperation concerns, however, were disappointing, as was his return to the "cultural context" rhetoric on the Badawi issue.

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